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## **AZERBAIJANI CARPET. HISTORY OF ITS REVIVAL.**

(late XIX - early XX century)

By the end of the Middle Ages, the ancient carpet art of Caucasian Azerbaijan experienced a great decline. Endless feudal wars of the XYIII century, political and economic instability, reduction of trade and handicraft production created an extremely unfavorable environment for carpet crafts in this region.

The rupture of economic and cultural relations with Persian Azerbaijan violated the natural process of mutual enrichment and transmission of carpet traditions. The orders of the shah's palaces, the aristocracy and the rich merchant layers to create large, luxurious and expensive carpets adorning the palace interiors of the highest nobility ceased.

This, in turn, led to the degeneration of professional carpet workshops (*Karkhane*) and the gradual departure from this profession of the remnants of highly skilled carpet-masters. The art of carpet making lost its professional makeup and shifted to the sphere of traditional folk crafts. New traditions are formed in the carpets of this region due to tribal art traditions.

At the beginning of the XIX century (1804-1813) the protracted Russian-Persian war brought the degradation of carpet craft to the level of complete extinction. According to the “Gulustan Peace” treaty of 1813, the territories of Baku, Karabakh, Ganja, Shirvan, Derbent, Guba and part of the Talysh khanate fall to the Russian Empire. As a result of another war (1826-1828), according to the “Turkmenchay Peace” treaty (1828), the Iravan and Nakhichevan Khanates were joined to the Russian Empire. Later on, the entire Caspian coast, including the Persian Astara, was joined to Russia.

By the end of these wars, in the region, in the country there is a political and administrative reorganization of the region in which the peoples of the former khanate of Persian and Caucasian Azerbaijan work.

Having strengthened its position in the South Caucasus, the Russian Empire is developing plans for obtaining economic profit from the territories of the South Caucasus. To implement these plans from 1880 to 1899, expeditions to the South Caucasus are being carried out in order to study the economic potential of the region, its resource base and the profitability of folk crafts.

The works of Markgraf, O.V. (1882), Levashov, I.I. (1894), Khatsov, K. (1894) and others published on these years on raw potential and folk crafts prepared the ground for the creation in 1899 of the “Caucasian Handicraft Committee”, with the aim of which was a massive revival of handicraft in the South Caucasus and the export of their products for the purchase of foreign currency. The patron of artisan politics in the Caucasus was the commander-in-chief of the civil part in the Caucasus, Adjutant General, Prince Golitsyn G.S.

The headquarters of the Handicraft Committee was located in the then “capital” of the South Caucasus - Tiflis. The head of the Handicraft Committee was appointed having aristocratic roots and a brilliant education of the textile artist - Julius Straume. Riga Latvian in origin - Straume, conducts a gigantic research work on the collection and fixation of local artistic traditions and the revival of lost crafts. As a result of numerous expeditions to the former regional centers of carpet weaving and remote mountain villages, technical drawings were created and many traditional designs of local carpets were restored.

The collected material was carefully analyzed. Ornaments and compositions were restored bit by bit. Regional training, creative and demonstration workshops were created throughout the South Caucasus, which were supplied with teaching materials, drawings, albums with drawings and photographs of restored carpets.

A research and creative laboratory was organized at the headquarters of the Handicraft Committee to restore the best traditional carpet designs. For the first time, carpet designs restored in the laboratory of the Committee were depicted as technical drawings on “graph paper”, then they were reproduced by hand by copy artists.

The brilliant artist Straume, for the first time, developed a method for accurately transferring complex compositions and ornaments from a drawing to a carpet — by tying knotting techniques to “graph paper” cells (with an 8-cell module). The name of the drawing template on “graph paper” will later be given the local name that the *Cheshni* understandable for the skilled workers (sample, source). Exactly following the pattern on the “graph paper” in the workshops of the handicraft Committee under the strict control of the master-instructor for production excluded errors and arbitrariness in the interpretation of ornamental motifs and carpet design.

Samples of ready-made carpets created in the weaving workshops of the Handicraft Committee and their technical drawings were sent to regional centers for their subsequent replication. In the regional workshops, more simplified versions of these carpets were made and woven, which were sent to weaving centers (mountain villages), where they were repeated according to visual memory, which sometimes led to the appearance of differences and variants of the basic composition.

The archive documents of the Handicraft Committee testify to the scrupulous mastering of the entire production chain from creating sketches, reproducing carpet samples, delivering them to weavers, supplying them with dyes and purchasing finished products.

Analysis of the artistic and technical merits of Azerbaijani carpets of the late XIX and early XX century suggests that large carpets with a complex design, professional weaving and high-quality dyes were created directly in the regional workshops of the Handicraft Committee under the supervision of a master instructor. These carpets could not be woven without precise technical drawings. Smaller carpets, with simplified compositions, were woven by analogy, individually, by simple peasant women in remote villages in their free time from everyday life and farming.

The Caucasian Handicraft Committee existed until the beginning of the First World War of 1914. After the October Revolution of 1917, carpet shops, workshops and laboratories of the Committee in 1924 were transferred to the ownership of “ZakGosTorg” (Joint Stock Company of the Transcaucasian State Trade), which continued the activities of the imperial Caucasian Handicraft Committee in Soviet times (1924-1935) and ensured the export of South Caucasus carpets to world markets.

Thus, as a result of the activities of the “Caucasus Handicraft Committee” and “ZakGosTorg”, among the world collectors, dealers, carpet experts and reference books, the name “Caucasian” and not “Azerbaijani” carpet stuck to Azerbaijani carpets. In addition, it should not be forgotten that at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries around the world and Russia, Azerbaijanis were called “Tatar” or “Muslim”. The ethnic name “Turk” or “Azerbaijani” was not used in the lexicon of foreign peoples.

The problem of the ethnic origin of South Caucasian carpets was not a subject of discussion because of the simplicity and convenience and the formal clarity of the term “Caucasian carpet”.

From the middle of the 30s of the 20th century, in the attributions and reference books, gradually, along with the name “Caucasian”, specific names of carpet weaving items appeared in which they were woven. But this tradition appears only in serious scientific research. In the dealer advertising descriptions, the old common name “Caucasian” is still used.

In modern times, dealers are forced to turn from primitive dealers into serious experts on Caucasian carpets.

Carpet is a traditional ethno-cultural phenomenon and without determining its ethnic origin, it loses its phenomenon of traditional identity, historical and material value.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS



ГЛАВНОЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ЗЕМЛЕУСТРОЙСТВА И ЗЕМЛЕДѢЛІЯ  
Отдѣлъ Сельской Экономіи и Сельскохозяйственной Статистики

# КАВКАЗСКІЕ КОВРЫ

АЛЬБОМЪ  
ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫХЪ РИСУНКОВЪ ДЛЯ КУСТАРЕЙ

Выпускъ I



С.-ПЕТЕРБУРГЪ

Title page Album technical drawings for craftsmen. Saint Petersburg. 1911





Technical drawings of Caucasian carpets. Saint Petersburg. 1911



№ VI

Котыр ва. Пирабедил. Кухнянского села, Кавказской обл.  
 Состояние: 10 кв. м. 10 кв. м. 10 кв. м. 10 кв. м.



ნახატი მხატვარ სერაფიმის 1911წ.

Fig. 10. Carpet 1911.

№ 18/11

ხალიჩა სოფ. პერაბედლისა აზერბაიჯანის სსრკ-ის რ-ნი

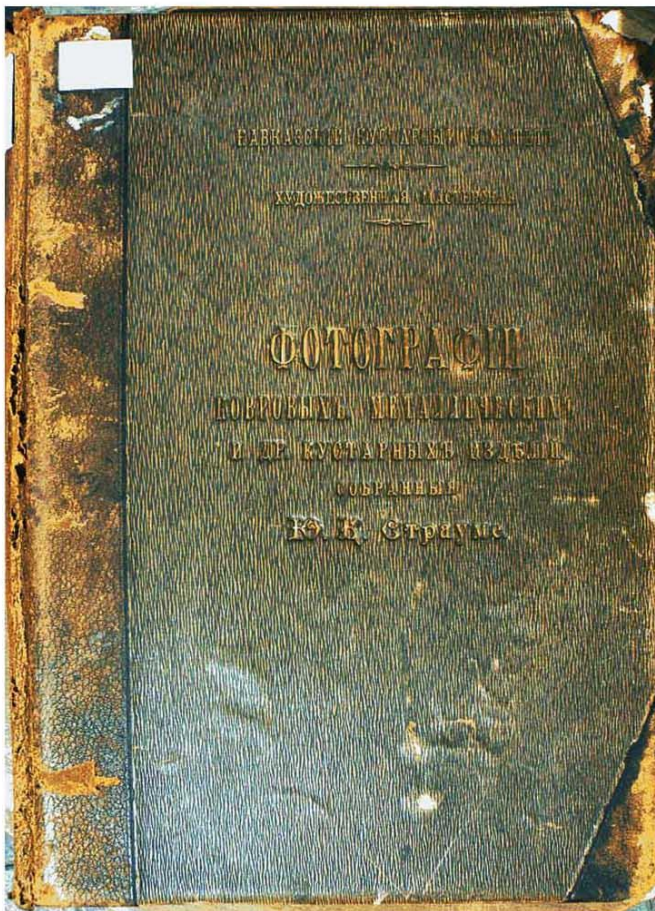
ზომა 160x120 სმ. ანუ 6 ფუტ. სიგრძე 16x16 კვანძი

Technical drawing. The Kuba village Pirabedil. 1911

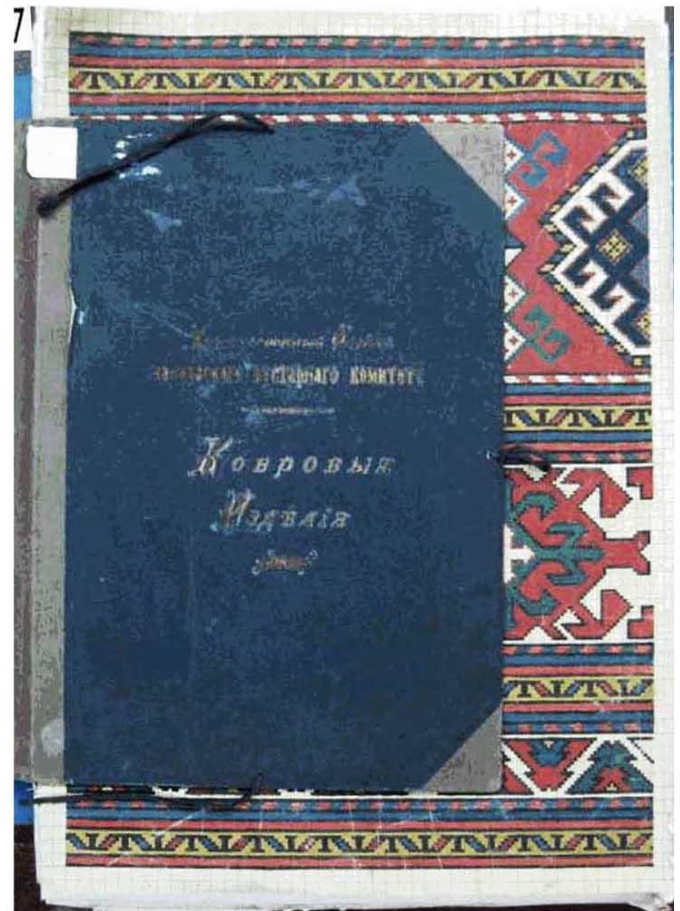


Technical drawing of a carpet from the Kuba village of Pirabedil. 1908.





Straume J.V. Book photos of the Handicraft Committee carpets. 1913



Album of executive technical drawings of the Handicraft Committee. 1913





Mākslinieks **Jūlijs Straume** pie paklāja raksta uz-  
mēšanas.

Straume Jūlijs. Organizer, artist and head of  
the Caucasian Handicraft Committee creative  
Laboratory.

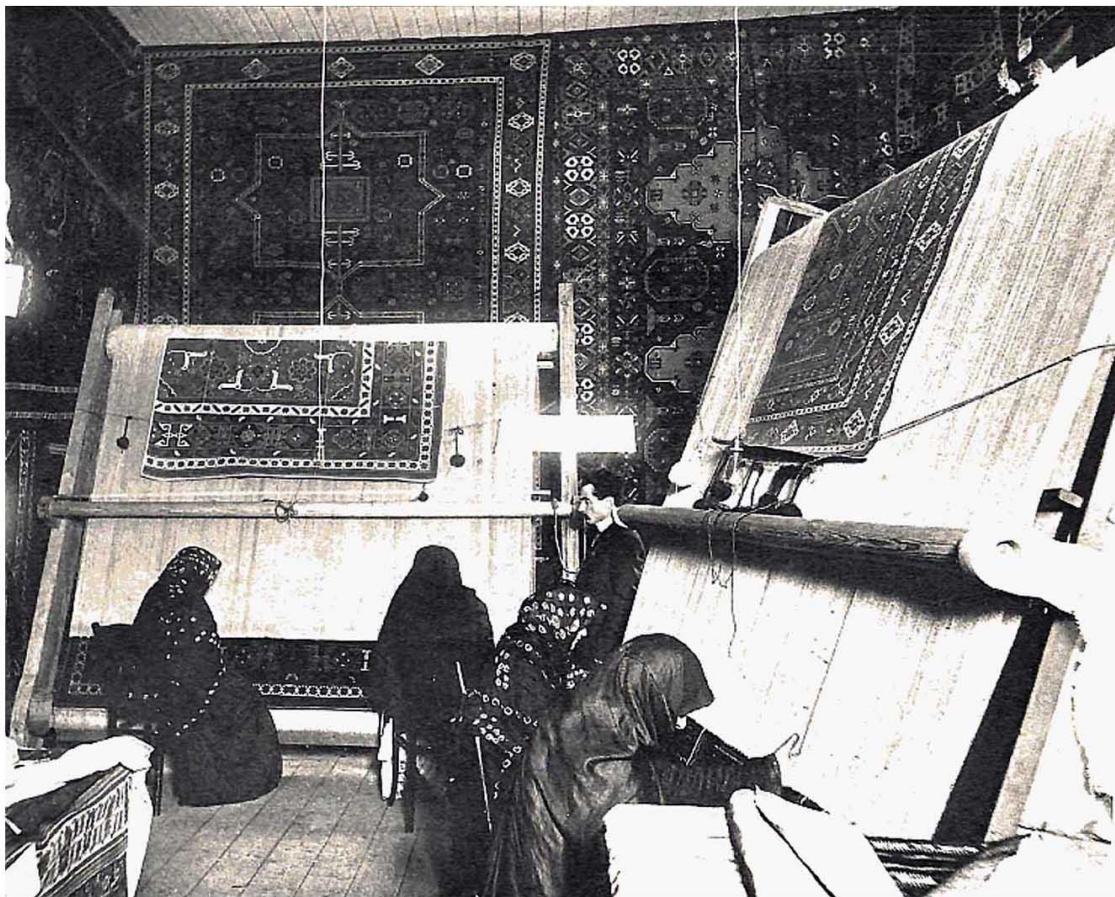


Carpet design, created personally by  
J.V. Straume



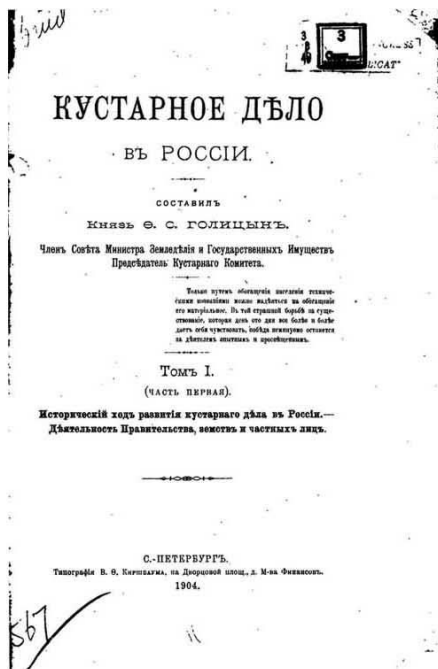
Photo flat-woven carpet "Zili". Book Photos of the handicraft committee carpets. 1913





Carpet weavers at work. Photos of the Caucasian Handicraft Committee. 1908-1911 years.



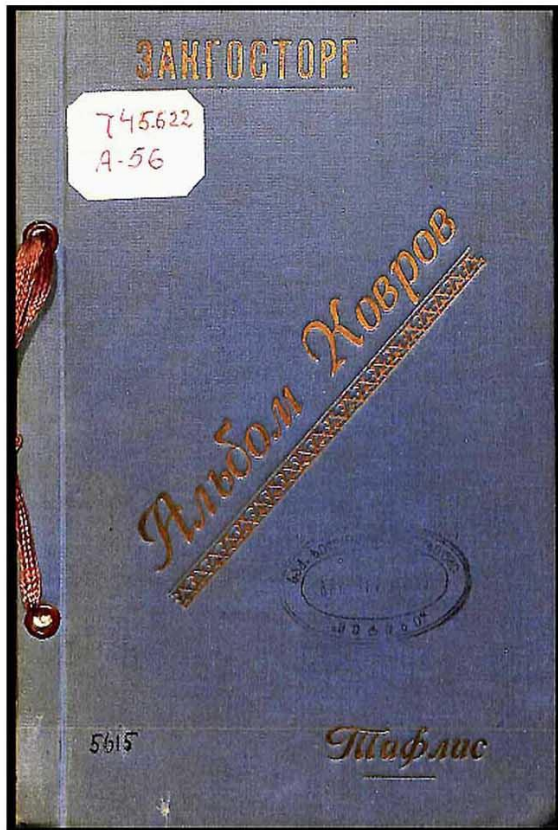


Map of the distribution of woolen handicrafts of the South Caucasus. Khatsov K.  
Handicraft industries of the Transcaucasian region. Tiflis 1904.



Artists-copiers workshop "ZakGosTorg." 1927





No. 3

ЗАНГОСТОРГ ТИФЛИС 1928г.  
Zakgostorg Tiflis



Kouba

Kyba قوبا

ЗАНГОСТОРГ ТИФЛИС 1928г.  
Zakgostorg Tiflis

No. 18



Bakou  
Баку

Разм. 144 X 117 см.

Baqi باکو  
ԲԱԿՈՒ  
ბაკო

ЗАНГОСТОРГ ТИФЛИС 1928г.  
Zakgostorg Tiflis

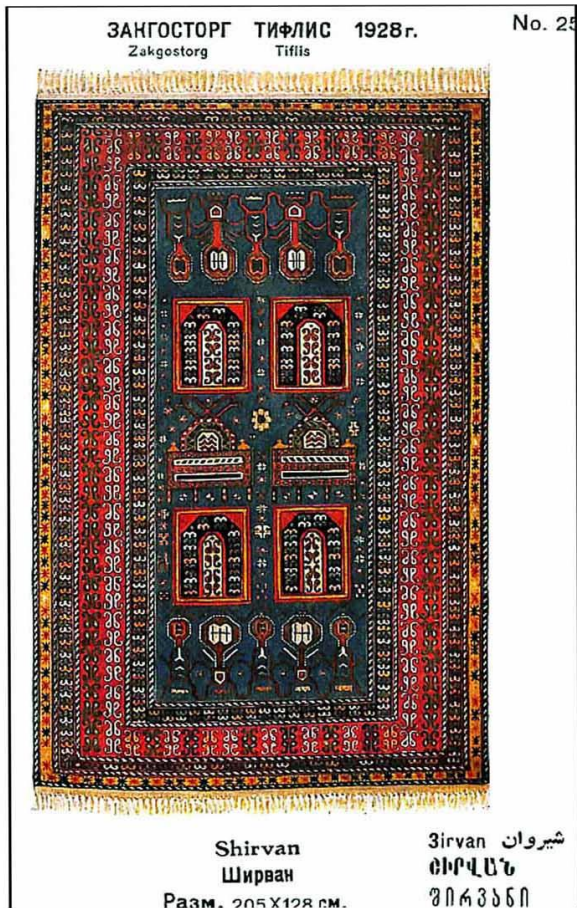
No. 35



Karabagh  
Карабах

Karabag قاراباغ  
ԿԱՐԱԲԱԳ





“ZakGosTorg” weaving workshops. 1932-1935





Carpet Bazaar. "Shaitan Bazar" ("Devil's bazaar"). Tiflis 1911-1916th years.



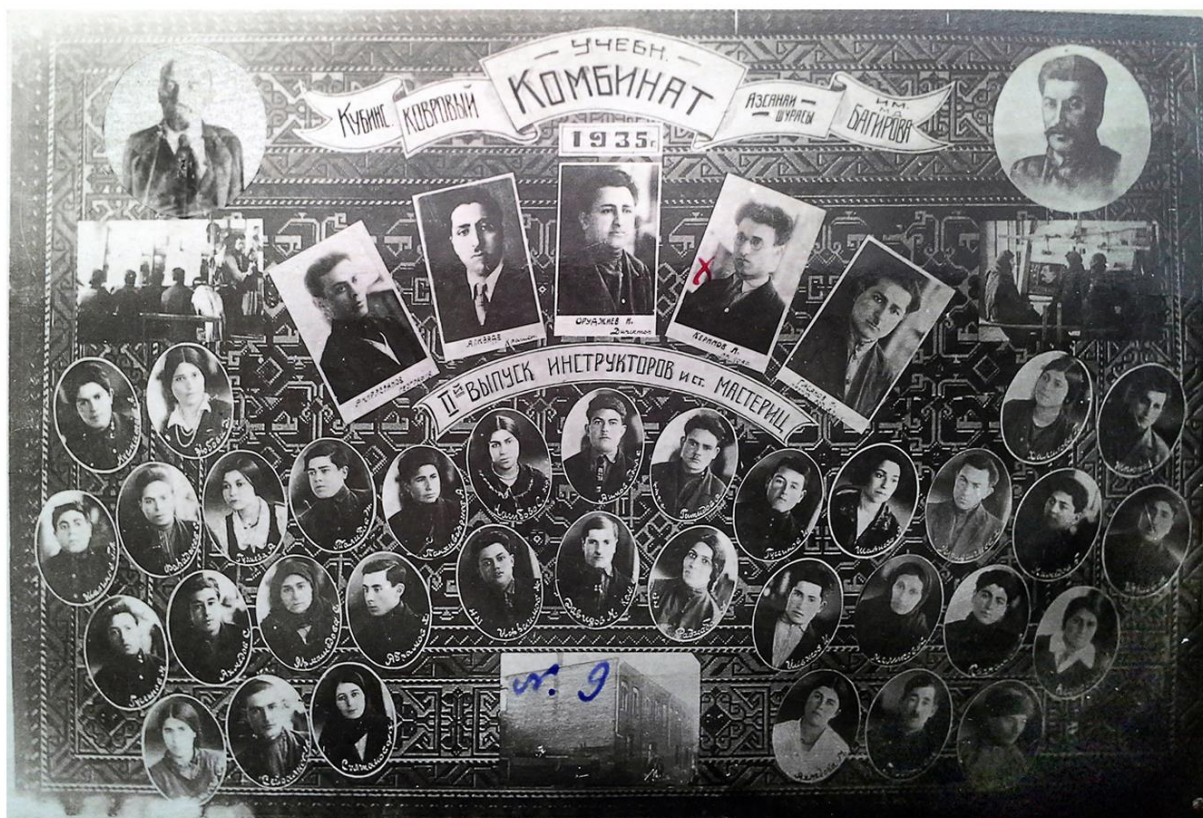


Members of the Baku Branch of the Caucasus Handicraft Committee. 1912



Expert evaluation of carpet by specialists of "ZakGosTorg". Kuba. 1935th year.





II Issue of Instructors and carpet weavers by the Kuba Carpet Training Complex. 1935.



III Issue of Instructors and Senior Masters by the Kuba Carpet Training Complex. 1935





Masters and carpet weavers of “Azerkhalcha”(Azerbaijanicarpet) Production Association 1949



The famous weaver, artist and expert on Caucasian and Iranian carpets, author of the 3- vols book “Azerbaijani Carpet” - Latif Karimov among carpet weavers. Kuba. 1960s.